



The Bee in Greek Mythology

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Source: *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 15 (1895), pp. 1-24

Published by: [The Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies](#)

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THE BEE IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY.

‘Apes...ego divinas bestias puto.’

PETRONIUS 56.



THE illustration which heads this paper shows a gold ornament in the form of a bee purchased in 1875 by the British Museum. It is a neat specimen of early granulated work; but, beyond the fact that it came from Crete,¹ nothing is known as to the circumstances of its discovery. Similar finds have, however, been made elsewhere. Furtwängler in the *Arch. Zeit.* vol. 41, col. 274, notices among the acquisitions of the Berlin Museum for the year 1882 ‘sundry small plates of gold from the Crimea representing a head of Dionysus, *Bees*, and a Gorgoneion.’ Our own national collection possesses fourteen bodies² of bees in gold of late Etruscan workmanship, and also a bee stamped in gold leaf of the same date. With these may be compared the three hundred golden bees found along with an ox-head of gold in the tomb of Childeric, king of the Franks.³ Doubtless other examples could be cited;⁴ and it seems worth while to attempt some investigation of their significance.⁵

¹ Perrot-Chipiez, *Hist. de l'Art* iii. 829, Fig. 592, erroneously say *Camiros*.

² So described by Mr. H. B. Walters, who adds: ‘Curiously enough the head is in each case missing.’ It has been suggested to me that they may be intended to represent larvae or chrysalids. In favour of this is the fact that no sign of fracture is visible where the head would have been joined to the body.

³ J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythol.* ii. ed. 1854, p. 659. De Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology*, ii. 217.

⁴ Flinders Petrie, *Tell el Amarna*, Pl. XVII.

figs. 336 and 337, shows two small models of bees or perhaps flies, but gives no clue to their meaning.

⁵ The present essay was substantially complete before W. Robert-Tornow's tractate *de apium mellisque apud veteres significatione et symbolica et mythologica* (Berlin, 1893) came into my hands. That lucid and interesting author gives an exhaustive digest of passages, from which I have borrowed sundry illustrations. He has not, however, led me to modify in any essential point the opinions which I had independently formed.

The provenience of the trinket above depicted may furnish us with a point of departure. Crete was, according to Nicander,⁶ the original home of bees, which appear repeatedly in its traditions. Antoninus Liberalis, on the authority of Boios, tells the following tale.⁷ 'In Crete there is said to be a cavern sacred to bees, where the story goes that Rhea gave birth to Zeus; and it is unlawful for any—be he god or man—to enter therein. Moreover, at a certain season year by year a flood of light streams forth from the cave; and tradition says that this takes place when the birth-blood of Zeus overflows.' Antoninus proceeds to relate that four men attracted by the honey encased themselves in bronze and ventured into the cave. Here they saw the swaddling-bands of Zeus; upon which their bronze armour split, and the god was minded to slay them with his thunderbolt. The Moirai and Themis intervened on the ground that it was unlawful for any man to die in the cave. Zeus relenting transformed the intruders into birds. An illustration of the legend occurs on a black-figured amphora from Vulci,⁸ which represents 'four male figures stung by bees, all nude and bearded; they are Laios, Keleos, Kerberos, and Aigolios.' The vase-painting gives the moment after the bronze has fallen from the men and before their metamorphosis. The whole story is to some extent based on fact. According to Aelian,⁹ 'Antenor in his *Tales from Crete* states that by divine instigation a swarm of those bees which are known as *χαλκοειδείς*¹⁰ attacked the town of the Raukioi and caused acute pain by their stings. The townsfolk unable to endure the plague quitted their native territory and migrating elsewhere founded through love of their mother-land (to adopt a Cretan phrase) a second town Raukos in Crete itself; for, though heaven drove them from their home, at least they could not brook being entirely robbed of their name. Further, Antenor relates that on Mount Ida in Crete are still to be found some few of these bees, endued with all the old ferocity of the race.' This narrative, I think, affords a partial explanation of the legend recorded by Antoninus. If a whole village was actually dispossessed¹¹ by bees, it may well be that a cavern tenanted by such fierce insects was regarded as an abaton¹² throughout the country side. Again, if the local name for the redoubtable bees was *χαλκοειδείς*, the myth-maker would be bound to arm his human marauders in bronze to match the mail of their opponents. But, conceding so much to rationalism, we have yet to account for (1) the associ-

⁶ As quoted by Columella, *de re rustica* ix. 2. On the other hand Euphronius, *ibidem*, said that they appeared first on Mount Hymettus in the days of Erechtheus: Euhemerus gave his verdict for Ceos, others again for Thessaly. Euteknios, *metaphr. Nicand. Alex.* 450, claims the honour for Nemea.

⁷ Ant. Lib. xix.

⁸ *Cat. of Vases in Brit. Mus.* vol. ii. p. 122, B 177.

⁹ Aelian, *de nat. an.* xvii. 32.

¹⁰ Diodorus, *Biblioth.* v. 70, says that Zeus,

in memory of his early connexion with the Cretan bees, ἀλλάξει τὴν χρῶαν αὐτῶν καὶ ποιῆσαι χαλκῶ χρυσοειδεῖ παραπλησίαν.

¹¹ Cases were on record of horses and boys being stung to death by bees: W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* pp. 60–61.

¹² Cp. Pliny, *N.H.* xxi. 46: 'aliud in Creta miraculum mellis. mons est Carina ix M. passuum ambitu: intra quod spatium muscae non reperiuntur, natumque ibi mel nusquam attingunt.'

ation of sacred bees with Rhea and the birth of Zeus, (2) the statement that the four Cretans were metamorphosed into birds.

On both points fresh evidence is obtainable. Lactantius¹³ in answer to the question—Who was the first to worship the gods?—replies: ‘Didymus in his *Notes on Pindar* states that Melisseus a king of Crete was the first to sacrifice to the gods, and to introduce novel rites and religious processions. He had two daughters, Amalthaea and Melissa, who nourished the infant Jupiter with goats’ milk and honey.¹⁴ Hence arose the poets’ tale¹⁵ that bees flew up and filled the child’s mouth with honey. Melissa was by her father made the first priestess to the Magna Mater; and from this fact the representatives of the goddess are still termed Melissae...The date of Melisseus must have been exceedingly early as he had the bringing up of Jupiter.’ It will be seen that Antoninus is here confirmed by Lactantius. The former made Rhea give birth to Zeus in a Cretan cave and spoke of its *ἱεραὶ μέλιτται* as *τροφοὶ τοῦ Διός*. The latter says that the original priestess of the Magna Mater was the Cretan princess Melissa, who fed the infant Jupiter with honey, and that in memory of her office subsequent attendants of the goddess were also named Melissae. Why bees should be selected as fitting nurses of the godhead, is not at once obvious. Possibly it was because ‘in Graecia infantes primum melle alebantur, quod ex Paulo et Aetio monstrat Is. Vossius ad Barnabae Epist. p. 311: cui rei ollulam cum spongia adhibuerunt.’¹⁶ The custom still survives in the Greek Archipelago. Rennell Rodd¹⁷ states that, in the island of Rhodes, the child eight days after birth is placed for the first time in a cradle where ‘its lips are touched with honey by another child, who must according to prescribed usage be the eldest of a family, saying “Be thou sweet as this honey.”’ The ceremony with which this rite is performed rather points to some underlying superstition connecting the bee with birth. But for the present it will suffice to remember that Zeus Kretagenes has intimate relations with the bee. Columella¹⁸ mentions ‘mulier pulcherrima specie Melissa, quam Iupiter in apem convertit.’ Hesychius quotes *Μελισσαῖος* as an epithet of Zeus. And the bee is his emblem on the coins of several Cretan cities.¹⁹ There is, moreover, another tale told by Antoninus²⁰ which connects the bees as nurses with Zeus. It is an excerpt from Nicander’s *Ἐπεροειμένων β’*. ‘Zeus had by a nymph of Othrys a son afterwards named Meliteus. The mother through fear of Hera exposed the babe in the woodlands. But, in accordance with the will of Zeus, so far from perishing he thrived upon nourishment supplied by bees. Now Phagros the son of Apollo and this same Othryan

¹³ Lactant. *Div. Inst.* i. 22.

¹⁴ Callim. *hymn. in Iov.* 48 ff. Diod. *Bibl.* v. 70. Apollod. *Bibl.* I. i. 6–7.

¹⁵ Verg. *Georg.* iv. 152. Colum. *de re rust.* ix. 2.

¹⁶ Boeckh on Pindar, *Olymp.* vi. 36–47: cp. W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* pp. 119–122. The *Μέλιττα τιτθῇ* of the *C.I.G.* 808 is a mere

coincidence.

¹⁷ *The Customs and Lore of Modern Greece*, p. 107.

¹⁸ Columella, *de re rustica* ix. 2.

¹⁹ E.g. Elyrus (Head, *Hist. Num.* p. 393), Hyrtacina (*ibid.* p. 397), Praesus *ibid.* p. 404).

²⁰ Antoninus Liberalis xiii.

nymph, the mother of Meliteus the child in the wood, while feeding his flock chanced to fall in with the boy. Astonished at his healthy looks and still more so at the attendant bees, he picked him up and carrying him off home reared him with the greatest care. He gave the lad the name Meliteus because he had been fed by bees. Further, he called to mind the oracle in which God had told him once on a time to preserve as his brother the boy fed by bees. As soon as Meliteus grew to man's estate he proved himself worthy of his noble birth, and became king over many neighbouring tribes: he also founded a town in Phthia and called it Melite.²¹

To deal next with the transformation of Laios and his comrades. Roscher²² thinks it probable that the whole myth arose from the observation that certain species of birds prey upon bees. But, apart from the fact that the birds specified by Antoninus have no known antipathy to bees, this suggestion would not account for the alliance between bees and birds which we find elsewhere.²³ It seems safer to recall the variant tradition that birds as well as bees fed the infant Zeus in his Cretan cavern. Moiro the Byzantine poetess²⁴ wrote :

Ζεὺς δ' ἄρ' ἐνὶ Κρήτῃ τρέφετο μέγας, οὐδ' ἄρα τίς νυν
 ἡεῖδει μακάρων· ὁ δ' ἀέξετο πᾶσι μέλισσι.
 τὸν μὲν ἄρα τρήρωνες ὑπὸ ζαθέῳ τράφον ἄνθρω,
 ἀμβροσίην φορέουσai ἀπ' Ὀκεανοῖο ῥοάων·
 νέκταρ δ' ἐκ πέτρης μέγας αἰετὸς αἰὲν ἀφύσσω
 γαμφηλῆς, φορέεσκε ποτὸν Διὶ μητιόεντι.
 τὸν καὶ νικήσας πατέρα Κρόνον εὐρύσπα Ζεὺς
 ἀθάνατον ποίησε καὶ οὐρανῷ ἐγκατένασσε.
 ὥς δ' αὐτῶς τρήρωσι πελειάσιν ὥπασε τιμὴν,
 αἰ δὴ τοι θέρεος καὶ χείματος ἄγγελοι εἰσίν.

Possibly, then, the intruding Cretans were so to speak pressed into the service of Zeus under the form of birds. At any rate it is noteworthy that *πελειάδες* as well as *μέλισσαι* were his chosen attendants.

There were other localities besides Crete where the officiating priestess was termed a *μέλισσα*. Pindar's²⁵ lines are notorious :—

ὦ μάκαρ υἱὲ Πολυμνάστου, σὲ δ' ἐν τούτῳ λόγῳ
 χρησμὸς ὥρθωσεν μελίσσας Δελφίδος αὐτομάτῳ κελάδῳ.

This we can hardly fail to connect with the singular statement of Pausanias :²⁶ ' the Delphians affirm that their second temple was built by bees

²¹ Coins of Melitaea in Phthiotis (Head, *Hist. Num.* p. 256) have a head of Zeus on the obverse side, and on the reverse a bee with ΜΕΛΙ or ΜΕΛΙΤΑΙΕΩΝ. This is not merely, as Prof. Ridgeway (*Origin of Currency and Weight Standards*, p. 323) contends, a *type parlant*; it alludes in all probability to the local legend given above.

²² Roscher, *Lex.* col. 154, s.v. Aigolios.

²³ E.g. the legend of Ibrâhîm Ibn Edhem in the *Tuti-Name*, which tells how a bee carried crumbs of bread away from the king's table to take them to a blind sparrow (De Gubernatis, *op. cit.* ii. 217).

²⁴ *Ap. Athen. Deip.* 491 B.

²⁵ Pind. *Pyth.* iv. 59-60.

²⁶ Paus. X. v. 5.

of the bees' wax and of wings (ἀπό τε τοῦ κηροῦ τῶν μελισσῶν καὶ ἐκ πτερῶν):²⁷ it was sent, they say, by Apollo to the Hyperboreans. Again, another legend has it that the temple was founded by a Delphian named Pteras—the builder's name being transferred to the building: from this same Pteras, so the story goes, the Cretan town of Apteraioi derives its name by the addition of a single letter.' In short we have a tolerably broad hint that the second temple at Delphi, a pre-historic structure, was dedicated to a joint worship of bees and birds. Prof. Middleton²⁸ seems right in referring to this double cult the line quoted by Plutarch²⁹ as the earliest example of heroic metre:

συμφέρετε πτερὰ οἶωνοι κηρόν τε μέλισσαι.

A trace of the bees persisted in the name μέλισσαι still given to Apollo's priestesses.³⁰ Whether the birds had similar ministrants, corresponding to the πέλειαι or πελειάδες at Dodona,³¹ we have no means of determining: but it is conceivable that a relic of the cult should be found in the famous omphalos, which on ancient works of art is repeatedly represented as a large egg standing on end and occasionally flanked by a couple of birds.³² Another point to be noticed is that, according to local tradition, the second temple at Delphi had been built by one Pteras who had affinities with the Cretan Apteraioi. This is not our only warrant for supposing that in primitive times the Cretans had helped to colonize Delphian territory. Dr. Verrall infers from the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* (vv. 388—end) that the 'possessors of the oracle from the earliest memory down to the beginning of the sixth century B.C. were in origin partly Cretan.'³³ Consequently it is tempting to conjecture that the cult of μέλισσαι and πελειάδες (?) at Delphi was derived from the sanctity attached to μέλισσαι and πελειάδες in Crete.

If we now ask ourselves—How came these dissimilar creatures to be the objects of a united worship?—we recur to the legend which domiciled both bees and birds in the Cretan cave. Nothing could be more natural than that the animals which haunted this cave, the traditional birthplace of Zeus, should be regarded as his attendants. Entitled thus to a common reverence they would together cross the sea to Delphi. It is at least clear that in both localities they were essentially *chthonian*. On the one hand

²⁷ The odd collocation of wax and wings occurs again in the story of Icarus. Did the Sun-god destroy Icarus for presuming to employ substances peculiar to his own cult at Delphi? For the sun represented as a bee *vide infra*.

²⁸ *J.H.S.* ix. 3.

²⁹ Plut. *περὶ τοῦ μὴ χρᾶν κ.τ.λ.* § 17. If πτερῶν in Paus. *loc. cit.* denoted the bees' wings, it would have had the article. Philostrate. *vit. Apoll.* vi. 10 (quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 171) says ξυμβαλέσθαι λέγονται μέλιτται μὲν κηρόν, πτερὰ δὲ ὄρνιθες.

³⁰ The author of a work on Delphi (known to Tzetzes, *chil.* vi. 90, 936, and the Schol. on Hesiod, p. 29) was named Melisseus—again no more than a coincidence.

³¹ Herodot. ii. 55, 57. Soph. *Trach.* 172, with Schol. *ad loc.* Paus. VII. xxi. 1, X. xii. 5.

³² *J.H.S.* ix. 14 ff. Sometimes the omphalos is covered by 'strings of what look like small eggs': but these are probably to be interpreted as woollen taeniae.

³³ *J.H.S.* xiv. 7.

the Cretan birds and bees occupied a sacred cave,³⁴ where they ministered to the child of Rhea. On the other hand the Delphian³⁵ egg-stone with its guardian birds marked the centre of the earth, while the oracular functions appropriate to chthonian powers were discharged by the Delphian 'bees.'

Further proof that the bee was a chthonian animal is afforded by its connexion with Dionysus. According to Apollonius Rhodius³⁶ this deity was in his infancy fed with honey by Makris, a daughter of Aristaeus:

ἄνθρωπ' ἐν ἡγαθέῳ, τόθι δὴ ποτε Μάκρις ἔβαιεν,
κούρη 'Αρισταίου μελίφρονος, ὅς ῥα μελίσσέων
ἔργα πολυκμήτοιο τ' ἀνέυρατο πῖαρ ἐλαίης.
κείνη δὲ πᾶμπρωτα Διὸς Νυσηίου νῖα
Εὐβοίης ἔντοσθεν 'Αβαντίδος ᾧ ἐνὶ κόλπῳ
δέξατο, καὶ μέλιτι ξηρὸν περὶ χεῖλος ἔδευσεν.

Ovid,³⁷ however, regards Bacchus as himself the discoverer of honey:—

Melle pater fruitur: liboque infusa calenti
Iure repertori candida mella damus.

Dyer in *The Gods in Greece* (p. 143) remarks that Euripides, whose *Bacchants*³⁸ draw milk, wine, and honey from the soil, was probably familiar with the legend of Makris. Diodorus³⁹ tells at length a tale which makes Dionysus the son of Ammon and Amalthea. The father from fear of Rhea carried the child to a cave near Mount Nysa in an island formed by the Cretan river Triton. Here he was entrusted to the care of Nysa, another daughter of Aristaeus: ἐπιστάτην δ' αὐτοῦ τάξαι τὸν 'Αρισταῖον, ἄνδρα συνέσει καὶ σωφροσύνῃ καὶ πάσῃ παιδείᾳ διαφέροντα.⁴⁰ Daremberg and Saglio (*Dict. Ant.* I. i. p. 621 s.v. Bacchus) state: 'L'abeille appartient naturellement à Dionysos *Brisaios*, comme dieu du miel.' But to this we must return later on. Meantime his affinity with the insect is illustrated by an engraved gem,⁴¹ which represents him crowned with vine leaves and wearing a beard composed of four bees'-wings. Finally, 'Dionysus after having been torn to pieces in the form of a bull was born again, according to those who were initiated in the Dionysian mysteries, in the form of a bee.'⁴² It is interesting to observe that the foregoing *παλιγγενεσία* belongs to Dionysus in his character of Zagreus,⁴³ and that as Zagreus he was worshipped by both Cretans and Delphians. 'The conception of Zagreus,'

³⁴ The details relating to this cavern—the glare emitted and the red stream that 'boiled over'—perhaps point to volcanic phenomena.

³⁵ In Crete too there was an 'Ομφαλός, about which a story was current connecting it with the birth of Zeus (*Diod. Bibl.* v. 70).

³⁶ Ap. Rhod. *Arg.* iv. 1129–34.

³⁷ Ovid, *Fasti* iii. 735 ff.

³⁸ Eur. *Bacch.* 142, 710. Himerius, *Or.* xiii. 7.

³⁹ *Diod. Bibl.* iii. 68 ff.

⁴⁰ With this agrees Oppian, *Cyney.* iv. 271 ff.

⁴¹ Lenormant, *Pierres gravées d'Orléans* i. Pl. 59; Chabouillet, *Catalogue général des camées, &c., de la bibliothèque impériale*, No. 1625. See E. Thraemer in Roscher, *Lex.* col. 1153 s.v. 'Geftügelter Dionysos.'

⁴² De Gubernatis, *op. cit.* ii. 217. I do not know on what authority the statement rests.

⁴³ Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 710 ff.

says Mr. A. S. Murray,⁴⁴ 'or the winter Dionysus, appears to have originated in Crete, but it was accepted also at Delphi, where his grave was shown.'

In the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* we get a seeming personification of mantic bees in the neighbourhood of Delphi. Apollo thus addresses the son of Maia: ⁴⁵—'There be certain Fates, sisters born, virgins who delight them on swift wings, three in number; and, their heads sprinkled with white meal, they have their home beneath the fold of Parnassus, distant teachers of prophecy, which I too practised in childhood's days when tending kine, all unnoticed of my father. Starting hence they flit now hither now thither, feeding on honey-combs and bringing each several thing to pass. When they dart along full-fed with yellow honey, they declare the truth with a willing heart; but if they be robbed of the gods' sweet sustenance, then they lie as they hurry to and fro.' Some details of this description call for comment. Hermann's conjecture *Θριαί* for the MSS. *Μοῖραι* has been generally accepted, though Lobeck relying on a variant *Σεμναί* suggests *Ἱραι* as an alternative.⁴⁶ To me the manuscripts' reading commends itself more than either of the proposed changes. Then again the phrase *κατὰ δὲ κρατὸς πεπαλαγμέναι ἄλφιστα λευκὰ* perhaps describes the pollen-covered bees in terms which are meant to recall the *ἀλφιτομόνταις*.⁴⁷ In any case we have here bees endowed with prophetic powers, a trait which reappears elsewhere.⁴⁸ Of the bee-Dionysus we have already spoken; it may be added that, according to the Scholiast on Pindar,⁴⁹ he was the first to mount the Delphic tripod and foretell the future. Iamos, son of Apollo by Euadne, from whom the prophetic Iamidæ traced their descent, was fed by two snakes *ἀμεμφεῖ ἰφὲ μελισσῶν*.⁵⁰ And the oracle of Trophonios was made known to the Boeotians by means of a swarm of bees.⁵¹ It is possible that the prophetic talent attributed to bees was based on the observation that *προγινώσκουσι καὶ χειμῶνα καὶ ὕδωρ αἱ μέλιτται· σημεῖον δέ, οὐκ ἀποπέτονται γὰρ ἀλλ' ἐν τῇ εὐδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ἀνείλδονται, ᾧ γινώσκουσιν οἱ μελιττουργοὶ ὅτι χειμῶνα προσδέχονται*.⁵² Those who were possessed of supernatural shrewdness, in particular singers and sages, are said to have been fed by bees, commonly

⁴⁴ *Enc. Brit.* ed. 9, vii. 249.

⁴⁵ Hom. *Hymn. in Mercur.* 552-563.

⁴⁶ Lobeck, *op. cit.* p. 816.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 815, n. C. To the list there given add Hesychius' glosses *ἀλφιδόμαντις· ἀλφίτοις μαντευομένη* and *ἀλφιστοσκόποι· ἀλφιτομόνταις*.

⁴⁸ See W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* pp. 35-39: 'de apium examine vel imperatoriae vel regiae dignitatis, omnino potestatis divitiarumque, omine'; *ibid.* pp. 43-60: 'de apium examine diro militibus portento.' The author here refutes at length the opinion of Creuzer that a swarm of bees was 'omen faustum militibus,' admitting, however, that the bees which were seen over Rollo's army in A.D. 800 possibly portended a happy issue to his expedition (why

not an *unhappy* issue to his foes?). He continues: 'si autem causam, cur apes symbolum terroris fuerint, quaerimus, ea in aculei vi patere videtur.' A better cause may be found in the funeral associations of the bee; *vide infra*. Its prophetic office was not confined to Greece, e.g. Josephus, *Archaeol.* V. vi. *Δεβώρα προφήτις, μέλισσαν δὲ σημαίνει τοῦνομα*.

⁴⁹ *Argum. Pyth.* quoted by Prof. Middleton in the *J.H.S.* ix. 21.

⁵⁰ Pindar, *Olymp.* vi. 45 ff.

⁵¹ Pausanias IX. xl. 1.

⁵² Aristotle, *An. Hist.* x. 40, 627b 10. Cp. Aelian, *de nat. an.* i. 11, v. 13. Aratus, *prognost.* 296. Philes, *de an. prop.* 567 f.

during infancy.⁵³ The story is told of Hesiod,⁵⁴ Pindar,⁵⁵ Sophocles,⁵⁶ Plato,⁵⁷ Vergil,⁵⁸ Lucan,⁵⁹ and Ambrose.⁶⁰ Nonnos relates that Astraea fed the infant Beroë—⁶¹

Ἀτθίδος ἡδυτόκοιο περιθλίψασα μελίσσης
δαιδαλέην ὥδινα πολυτρήτοιο λοχείης,
κηρία φωνήεντα σοφῶ κεράσασα κυπέλλῳ·

the purpose of this diet being to breed in the babe wisdom and eloquence :
ἐσήμαινε γὰρ τὸ μέλι τὴν εὐέπειαν τῆς σοφίας,⁶² and as the poet observes—⁶³

ταίῃ ἔην Βερόη, Χαρίτων θάλος· εἶποτε κούρη
λαροτέρην σίμβλοιο μελίρρυτον ἦπνε φωνήν,
ἡδυεπῆς ἀκόρητος ἐφίστατο χεῖλεσι Πειθῶ.

In like manner the Muses as patrons of divine song are akin to bees :—

Εὐτέρπη δονάκεσσι πολυτρήτοισι λιγαίνει,
πνεῦμα σοφῆς ὀχετηγὸν ἐπισπείρουσα μελίσσης.⁶⁴

And the bee is regarded as especially devoted to their service.⁶⁵ They sent bees to feed their favourite, the Sicilian Komatas, who sacrificed his master's goats to them, and was by way of punishment confined for two months in a wooden chest.⁶⁶ Sometimes they actually appeared in insect form. It was as a swarm of bees⁶⁷ that they guided the Athenian colonists to Ionia, a country which they loved. And in the case of their devotees, who *apis Matinae more modoque* gather poetic honey, the similitude passes into a commonplace.

We have remarked that Dionysus was fed with honey by Makris, a daughter of Aristaeus. The legend of Aristaeus himself, as told by Vergil in his fourth *Georgic*,⁶⁸ is instructive. This Thessalian shepherd, son of the

⁵³ Cp. *Anth. Pal.* ii. 342 of Homer; *ibid.* ix. 187 of Menander.

⁵⁴ See the author of Lucan's life quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 116.

⁵⁵ Pausanias IX. xxiii. 2. Aelian, *V.H.* xii. 45. Philostrat. *Im.* ii. 12. Cp. Porphyry. *de abst.* iii. 17.

⁵⁶ Philostrat. jun. *Im.* xiv. 1. W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 110, compares a gem described by Winckelmann, which represents a mask with a bee about to fly into its open mouth.

⁵⁷ Cicero, *de divinatione*, I. xxxvi. 78, II. xxxi. 66. Valer. Max. I. vi. 3. Pliny, *N.H.* XI. xviii. Aelian, *V.H.* x. 21, xii. 45. Olympiod. *vit. Plat.* p. 583. Cp. Clem. Al. *Strom.* I. xi. Σικελικὴ τῇ ὄντι μέλιττα, προφητικῷ τε καὶ ἀποστολικῷ λειμῶνος τὰ ἔνθη δρεπόμενος.

⁵⁸ *Vit. Verg.* 25 ap. Reifferssch. Sueton. pp. 68-72, quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 116.

⁵⁹ Reifferssch. Sueton. pp. 76-79, quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 116.

⁶⁰ *The Golden Legend*, ed. Th. Graesse, p. 250, quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 117.

⁶¹ Nonnos, *Dion.* xli. 218 ff.

⁶² Artemidorus, *Oneirocrit.* v. 83.

⁶³ Nonnos, *Dion.* xli. 250 ff.

⁶⁴ *Anth. Pal.* ix. 505, 5-6.

⁶⁵ Aelian attributes to the bee φιλοφθίαν καὶ φιλομουσίαν. Philes, *de an. prop.* 589, says καὶ φιλόμουσός ἐστιν, ὡς ὄρνις τάχα. And Varro, *de re rustica* III. xvi. 7 'apes... musarum esse dicuntur volucres.'

⁶⁶ Theocr. *Id.* vii. 78 ff., *Syr.* 3.

⁶⁷ Philostrat. *Im.* II. viii. 5. Himerius, *Orat.* x. 1, xxviii. 7, ed. Dübner.

⁶⁸ Verg. *Georg.* iv. 317-558. Ovid, *Fasti* i. 363-380, has an epitome of the tale. The various sources are collected by K. Blondel in Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. Ant.* I. i. p. 424, s.v. 'Aristaeus,' and still more fully by Schirmer in Roscher, *Lex. coll.* 547-551.

Thymbraean Apollo, finding his bees perish from disease appealed to his mother Cyrene, who dwelt with her sister nymphs at the bottom of the river Peneus. At her invitation he descended into the flood till he reached the fountain-head of all rivers, a subaqueous cavern of surpassing beauty. Here he was told that he must capture Proteus in Pallene and learn from him the cause of the disease. Helped by Cyrene he succeeded in surprising the god, who informed him that the trouble was due to the vengeance of Orpheus. Eurydice in her endeavours to escape from the shepherd's embraces had been bitten to death by a serpent; and thus Aristaeus' sin had led to Orpheus' fruitless quest and ultimate doom. It was the Napæan nymphs, the former playmates of Eurydice, who had destroyed his bees. To appease them he must sacrifice four choice bulls and four cows, leaving their bodies in a shady wood. After eight days had elapsed he should return and complete the expiation. He did so, and found to his surprise—

‘liquefacta boum per viscera toto
stridere apes utero et ruptis effervere costis,
immensasque trahi nubes, iamque arbore summa
confluere et lentis uvam demittere ramis.’

This is the mythical prototype of the method actually recommended by Vergil⁶⁹ for the procreation of bees. It is given more in detail by Florentinus,⁷⁰ who professes to follow Democritus and Varro. A fat bullock, thirty months old, is confined in a narrow chamber measuring ten cubits every way and pierced by a door and four windows. He is then beaten till bones and flesh are alike crushed, though blood must not be drawn. Next, every aperture in his body is stuffed up with pitched rags, and he is laid on a heap of thyme. The door and windows are closed with mud so as to exclude light and air. After three weeks the chamber is thrown open, but care must be taken not to admit wind. When aired enough the body is fastened up as before and left for ten days longer. On the eleventh day clusters of bees will be found, while of the bullock nothing remains but horns, bones, and hair. The central idea of this singular superstition is that the life of the bull is perpetuated in the life of the bees, which are as Porphyry⁷¹ calls them *Βουργεῖς*. Ovid⁷² emphasizes the point:—

‘fervent examina putri
De bove : mille animas una necata dedit.’

The pluralization of the soul implied by this process was not likely to prove a stumbling-block to primitive imagination. ‘The savage,’ says Mr. Frazer,⁷³

⁶⁹ Vergil, *Georg.* iv. 295–314. See further the authorities quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* pp. 19–29, from Philetas of Cos in the fourth century B.C. to ‘Rabusium quendam,’ who in his book *Von dem Veldtbau* (Strassb. 1566) has a chapter entitled ‘Von den Bynen und wie sie aus einem todten Rindt wachsen.’ To his list should be added Philes, *de an. prop.*

1198.

⁷⁰ *Geopon.* xv. 2.

⁷¹ Porphyry, *de ant. Nymph.* 18. Theocritus, *Syr.* 3 ταυροπάτωρ = μέλισσα (Jo. Pedias. and Max. Hol. *ad loc.*). Varro, *de re rustica* II. v. *Βουργόνας* = ‘apes.’

⁷² Ovid, *Fasti* i. 379 f.

⁷³ *The Golden Bough* ii. 339.

'unshackled by dogma, is free to explain the facts of life by the assumption of as many souls as he thinks necessary.' The directions given above are so many precautions to prevent the soul of the bull from escaping, and can in every case be paralleled from savage custom. He is confined in a narrow chamber, the door and windows of which are closed with mud; and entombment, to the early mind, serves the purpose of prisoning the spirit of the deceased. When he is beaten to death, no blood must be drawn; and primitive peoples frequently 'abstain in the strictest manner from eating the blood of any animal, as it contains the life and spirit of the beast.'⁷⁴ Every aperture in his body is stuffed up with pitched rags; and 'the soul is commonly supposed to escape by the natural openings of the body...The Itonamas in South America seal up the eyes, nose, and mouth of a dying person, in case his ghost should get out and carry off other people.'⁷⁵ He is laid on a heap of thyme, probably to attract the new-born bees:⁷⁶ just so the soul is sometimes 'conceived as a bird ready to take flight...Amongst the Battas of Sumatra, when a man returns from a dangerous enterprise, grains of rice are placed on his head, and these grains are called *padiruma tondi*, that is, "means to make the soul (*tondi*) stay at home."⁷⁷ When the chamber is aired, no wind must be allowed to enter; by it the soul might easily be carried off. Finally, the soul leaves the body in the form of bees; and similar transformations into lizard, raven, mouse, fly, or butterfly, have been widely believed.⁷⁸

It is very possible that this superstitious method of producing bees was attributed to Aristaeus merely because he was the pastoral deity who first taught men *τὴν κατασκευὴν τῶν σμηνῶν*.⁷⁹ He was in his infancy fed by the Horai on nectar and ambrosia.⁸⁰ He invented the mixture of honey with wine.⁸¹ He kept the flocks of the bee-loving Muses on the plain of Phthia; and possessed foreknowledge of the future. Tradition relates that he came to Ceos in obedience to Apollo's orders and there stayed an oppressive drought by a sacrifice to Zeus Ikmaios. He has indeed been identified with Zeus in this island under the name of Zeus Aristaios: in favour of the identification K. Blondel⁸² adduces Zeus Melissaios and Zeus Melichios. Aristaeus is also fabled to have visited Boeotia, Euboea, Crete, Sardinia and Sicily. The bee occurs as his symbol on the coin-types of Carthaea, Coresia, and Ioulis, in the island of Ceos⁸³; also on coins of the neighbouring islands Cimolos and Cythnos.⁸⁴ The mintage of Hybla and Camarina in Sicily⁸⁵

⁷⁴ *The Golden Bough*, i. 179.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* i. 123.

⁷⁶ Pliny, *N.H.* XI. xv., says of honey: 'in aestimatu est e thymo, coloris aurei, saporis gratissimi.' Cp. XXI. xxxi.: Vergil, *Ecl.* v. 77; *Georg.* iv. 112, 169, 181, 241, 270; *Aen.* i. 436.

⁷⁷ *The Golden Bough* i. 124.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* i. 126-7.

⁷⁹ Diod. *Bibl.* iv. 81. Cp. Oppian, *Cyneg.* iv. 269 ff. Nonnos, *Dion.* v. 232 ff.

⁸⁰ Pindar, *Pyth.* ix. 107.

⁸¹ Pliny, *N.H.* XIV. vi.

⁸² Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. Ant.* I. i. p. 424: 'il semble aussi avoir plus d'un rapport avec Zeus *Akraios* du Pélion.'

⁸³ Head, *Hist. Num.* p. 411.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 413.

⁸⁵ Ch. Morel in Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. Ant.* I. i. pp. 304-5. Head, *Hist. Num.* p. 129. Pausanias V. xxiii. 5 mentions the temple of a goddess *Ἰθλαία*, who is represented in connexion with a bee on the obverse of a coin of Hybla Magna.

has perhaps a similar import, if the bee is not a mere token of the prevailing industry. However, enough has been said to prove that Aristaeus was closely connected with bees, and with bees as emblematic of a fresh incarnation.

The same meaning must be assigned to the bees which play a part in the legend of Glaucus, the son of Minos and Pasiphae. Hyginus⁸⁶ gives the following version of the tale. 'Glaucus, while playing at ball, fell into a jar full of honey. His parents sought for him and inquired of Apollo concerning the boy. Apollo made answer:—"A monstrosity has been born to you; whoso can detect its meaning shall restore your son." On receiving this oracle Minos began to seek among his people for the monstrosity. They told him that a calf had been born, which thrice a day—once every four hours—changed its colour, being first white, then red, and lastly black. To get this portent interpreted Minos called together his augurs. They failed to find the solution, but Polyidus the son of Coeranus explained the portent by comparing the calf to a mulberry tree, the fruit of which is at first white, afterwards red, and when fully ripe black. Then said Minos to him:—"According to the word of Apollo, 'tis thou who must restore my son." Hereupon Polyidus, while taking the auspices, saw an owl perched upon a wine-bin and frightening away some bees. He welcomed the omen, and took up the lifeless lad from the jar. Minos then said to him:—"Thou hast found the body—now restore the life." Polyidus protested that this was an impossibility; but Minos ordered him to be shut up in a tomb along with the boy, a sword being laid ready to his hand. When this had been done, suddenly a snake glided out towards the boy's body. Polyidus, thinking that it was intent on food, promptly struck it with a sword and killed it. A second snake in search of its consort saw the dead beast, crept out with a certain herb, and by means of its touch restored life to the snake. Polyidus followed its example. The boy helped him to shout inside the tomb, and a passer-by told Minos of what had happened. He bade the monument be opened up, recovered his child safe and sound, and sent Polyidus back home laden with gifts.' In this curiously complex myth the bees, which were kept from entering the wine-bin by the owl, apparently symbolize the soul of the deceased endeavouring to regain the body within—an omen which was likely to direct Polyidus' attention to the jars in the bin.

Among the examples of primitive gold-work brought from Camiros in Rhodes by Messrs. Salzmann and Biliotti were two oblong plaques embossed with the design here reproduced⁸⁷—a winged female, who from the waist downwards has the body of a bee. Similar pendants from the same place⁸⁸ represent the so-called Persic Artemis, a winged female with a lion on either side of her.⁸⁹ This affords some ground for taking our figure to be that of a bee-goddess, perhaps a bee-Artemis. I am not aware that other evidence is forthcoming for the existence of such a cult in Rhodes.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Hyginus cxxxvi. p. 115, ed. M. Schmidt.

⁸⁷ *Arch. Zeit.* vol. 27, p. 111.

⁸⁸ Salzmann, *Nécropole de Camiros*, Pl. I.

⁸⁹ Cp. Roscher, *Lex.* col. 564; Micali, *Mon.*

Ined. Pl. I. 3, 23; Baumeister, *Denkm.* fig. 139;

'*Ep.* 'Αρχ. 1893, col. 213 ff. Pl. 8-10.

⁹⁰ At the same time the Rhodian superstition mentioned *supra* perhaps indicates that on this

But it is not a far cry from Rhodes to Ephesus, and it is known that something of the sort obtained among the Ephesians. Aeschylus in his tragedy of *The Priestesses*⁹¹ says :

εὐφραμεῖτε· μελισσονόμοι δόμον Ἀρτέμιδος πέλας οἴγειν.

‘Hold your peace! The bee-keepers are at hand to open the house of Artemis.’ On this Mr. Merry⁹² observes: ‘It is difficult to decide whether the word is connected with μέλεσθαι, *cure*, or μέλισσω, *propitiate*, or whether there is some mystical or symbolic allusion to bees.’ That the latter is the case seems to me certain from the Ephesian use of the word ἐσσην. Wood at the end of his *Discoveries at Ephesus* gives a selection of local inscriptions, one of which (No 16) is a decree relating to certain persons



resident in Rhodes; they are to be accounted as benefactors, and admitted into a tribe and a thousand by the Essenes (τοὺς Ἑσσηνας); the temple-wardens are to inscribe the decree on a pillar of stone and set it up in the temple of Artemis. This is cleared up by the author of the *Etymologicum Magnum* who has the following note: ⁹³ Ἑσσην· ὁ βασιλεὺς κατὰ Ἐφεσίους· ἀπὸ μεταφορᾶς τοῦ μελισσῶν βασιλέως. For a parallel usage he cites Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*, line 66,

οὐ σε θεῶν ἐσσηνα πάλιν θέσαν,

where ἐσσην is the equivalent of βασιλεύς. The Ephesian ‘king’ was of course the *rex sacrificulus*, and it is perhaps owing to the religious associations of the word ἐσσην that it was employed by Callimachus.⁹⁴ Some further points of interest are told us by Pausanias. In speaking of the temple of Artemis Hymnia near Orchomenos he says: ⁹⁵ ‘The priestess and the priest

island honey was considered especially attractive to the soul of the infant. For the time when the babe is first placed in the cradle is a critical moment, and at such moments the soul must be retained by guile. ‘Thus in Java when a child is placed on the ground for the first time...it is put in a hen-coop, and the mother makes a clucking sound as if she were calling hens’ (*The Golden Bough* i. 124).

⁹¹ *Frag.* 84, quoted by Aristoph. *Frogs* 1283.

⁹² *Ed. Frogs*, p. 122.

⁹³ *Etym. Mag.* 383, 30. See further Hicks *Brit. Mus. Inscr.* iii. p. 85.

⁹⁴ Callimachus, *Frag.* 508 Μυρμιδόνων ἐσσηνα tells against this. From evidence collected by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* pp. 34–35, it appears that in Egypt and other countries the bee was a royal symbol.

⁹⁵ Pausanias VIII. xiii. 1.

must throughout their lifetime preserve purity not only with regard to sexual intercourse, but also in other respects; their ablutions and their mode of sustenance differ from those of the people at large, nor may they enter the home of a private citizen. I am aware that similar restrictions are practised for a year, not for a lifetime, by the Ephesians who feast in honour of Artemis and are called by the citizens 'Εσσηνες.' If a conjecture may be hazarded, the peculiar diet enjoined upon the devotees of Artemis at Orchomenos and at Ephesus comprised abstinence from animal food and the consumption of honey. However that may be, there are bees carved on the sides of the Vatican statue which represents the many-breasted Artemis.⁹⁶ Also the bee occurs as an emblem of that goddess⁹⁷ on Ephesian coins from the sixth century onwards.⁹⁸ And, unless coin-types were borrowed in a purely arbitrary fashion, the cult of the bee-Artemis must have prevailed elsewhere. For we meet with the same symbol on moneys of Smyrna, Erythrae, Aradus and Parium:⁹⁹ even Elaeous in the Thracian Chersonese has coins with a head of Artemis on the obverse, and a bee on the reverse side.¹⁰⁰ Apollonius Rhodius¹⁰¹ makes Medea command Jason to sacrifice honey to Hekate, that is, to the chthonian Artemis. Μέλιττα in the *C.I.G.* 155 dedicates robes to Artemis; but this proves nothing, since the word used as a proper name is fairly common.

The worship of Artemis Ephesia brings into prominence a new feature of the bee symbolism. Hitherto that insect has come before us simply as a chthonian creature, typifying at most the *παλιγγενεσία* of the soul. At Ephesus our evidence points to ceremonial ablutions and continence¹⁰² as the main characteristics of the cult, though doubtless chthonian relations, which in the case of Artemis are never very far to seek, were not altogether absent. We are reminded of the beautiful words spoken by Hippolytus:¹⁰³

χαῖρέ μοι, ὦ καλλίστα,
καλλίστα τῶν κατ' Ὀλυμπον
παρθένων, Ἄρτεμι·
σοὶ τόνδε πλεκτὸν στέφανον ἐξ ἀκηράτου
λειμῶνος, ὦ δέσποινα, κοσμήσας φέρω,
ἐνθ' οὔτε ποιμὴν ἀξιοὶ φέρβειν βοτὰ

⁹⁶ Baumeister, *Denk.* i. 131, Fig. 138.

⁹⁷ Winckelmann and others explained the bee on coins as an appropriate emblem of a colony—a much less probable view, at any rate in the case of Ephesus.

⁹⁸ Head, *Hist. Num.* p. 494.

⁹⁹ Ch. Morel in Daremberg and Saglio, *Dict. Ant.* I. i. pp. 304–5. I suspect that the coin of Abdera, described by F. Osann in the *Arch. Zeit.* vol. 10, col. 457 ff., is only another example of this type.

¹⁰⁰ Imhoof-Blumer, *Monnaies Grecques*, p. 45, No. 40; p. 46, No. 41.

¹⁰¹ Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* iii. 1035, quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 144.

¹⁰² Riess in Pauly's *Real-Encycl.* ed. 2, col. 68, 52: 'Die Bienen... verlangten auch keusche und reine Wärter' (Pallad. i. 37, 4; iv. 15, 4). W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 12 ff., rightly derives this from the notorious fact that 'apium... coitus visus est numquam' (Pliny, *N.H.* xi. 16); he cites Vergil, *Georg.* iv. 197 ff., Petronius, p. 878, Quintilian, *Decl.* xiii. 16, &c. According to Aristotle, however, 761a 7 *ᾧπτα* πολλάκις ὁ συνδυασμὸς αὐτῶν.

¹⁰³ Eur. *Hipp.* 70 ff.

οὐτ' ἡλθέ πω σίδηρος, ἀλλ' ἀκήρατον
 μέλισσα λειμῶν' ἡρινὸν διέρχεται·
 Αἰδῶς δὲ ποταμίαισι κηπευεὶ δρόσοις.

But there were other members of the Greek pantheon with whom the bee was associated. Hesychius interprets μέλισσαι to mean αἱ τῆς Δήμητρος μύστιδες. He is apparently referring to a passage in Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, lines 110—112 :

Διοὶ δ' οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδωρ φορέουσι Μέλισσαι,
 ἀλλ' ἦτις καθαρὴ τε καὶ ἀχράντος ἀνέρπει
 πίδακος ἐξ ἱερῆς ὀλίγη λιβάς, ἄκρον ἄωτον.

Here we find certain Μέλισσαι performing a hydrophoria¹⁰⁴ in honour of bee Deo or Demeter, purity and sanctity being essential features of the rite. They reappear in a scholiast on Pindar,¹⁰⁵ who informs us that 'μέλισσαι is a term used primarily of the priestesses of Demeter, and by a misuse of language applied to all priestesses, διὰ τὸ τοῦ ζώου καθαρόν.' A second scholion on the same line has more to tell : 'Women initiated into the sacred rites go by the name of μέλισσαι. Hence our author says elsewhere¹⁰⁶ ταῖς ἱεραῖς μελίσαις τέρπεται. The nymphs also that haunted holy places were called Μέλισσαι—a fact explained by Mnaseas of Patara, who says that they caused mankind to cease from eating flesh and persuaded them to make use of vegetable food ; and in those days one of them, Melissa by name, found bees' honey-combs, and was the first to eat of them and mixing them with water to drink ; she taught her fellows to do the same, and called the creatures μέλισσαι after herself, treating them with the greatest care : he says, moreover, that all this happened in the Peloponnese. Nor would the temple of Demeter be honoured were it not for the nymphs, who first brought crops to light and forbade cannibalism and devised woodland clothing.' This scholion, then, combines two statements, (a) that the μύστιδες of Demeter were called μέλισσαι, (b) that the same title was given to certain non-carnivorous nymphs of the Peloponnese. It will be advisable to collect any further evidence that may be cited concerning both classes of 'bees.'

(a) Servius in commenting on Vergil, *Aeneid* i. 430, recounts a legend which involves an intimate connexion between Demeter and the bee. 'There was once,' he says, 'at the Isthmus a certain old dame called Melissa. She was taught by Ceres¹⁰⁷ the secrets of her ritual, and warned not to disclose to any one the mysteries which she had learnt. But when the womenfolk came and entreated her first by means of flattering words, then by prayers and promises, to reveal to them what Ceres had confided to her, and she persisted in holding her peace, then they became infuriated and tore

¹⁰⁴ Aelian, *de nat. an.* v. 49 : the king bee τὰς μὲν προστάττει ὕδροφορεῖν, τὰς δὲ ἔνδον κηρία διαπλάττειν, κ.τ.λ. Cp. Philes, *de an. prop.* 553.

¹⁰⁵ Schol. Pindar, *Pyth.* iv. 104.

¹⁰⁶ *Frag. incert.* 26.

¹⁰⁷ Eutecnios, *Metaphr. Nicand. Alex.* 450, makes Demeter teach the bees how to construct their honeycombs in hollow trees.

her asunder. Ceres avenged her fate by sending a plague upon these women and upon the whole neighbourhood ; moreover, she caused bees to be born from the body of Melissa.' Again, Persephone is called *Μελιτώδης* in Theocritus xv. 94 :

μὴ φύη, Μελιτώδες, ὃς ἁμῶν καρτερὸς εἴη,

and *Μελίβοια* in a verse of Lasos of Hermione, quoted by Athenaeus : ¹⁰⁸

Δάματρα μέλπω Κόραν τε Κλυμένοιο ἄλοχον Μελίβοιαν.

One ancient commentator on Theocritus' line has the following note : ¹⁰⁹ ' *Melitodes* like *Kore* is a euphemistic name for Persephone due to the fact that the priestesses of Persephone and Demeter were known as *μέλισσαι*. ' ¹¹⁰ Another subjoins an explanation of the euphemism : ' Because Persephone, being a subterranean goddess, brings bitterness rather than honey into the lives of men.' Dissen understands the fragment of Pindar quoted above as an allusion to Persephone. And it is possible that we should refer to the same deity the obscure statement of Porphyry : ¹¹¹ ὅταν δὲ τῷ Πέρσῃ (τῇ Περσεφόνῃ Barnes) προσάγωσι μέλι ὡς φύλακι καρπῶν, τὸ φυλακτικὸν ἐν συμβόλῳ τίθενται.

(b) Passing now to *μέλισσαι* in the sense of non-carnivorous nymphs, we must take account of several scattered hints. The daughters of the Cretan King Melisseus—Amalthea and Melissa—who fed the infant Zeus, are sometimes ¹¹² regarded as Dodonaean or Naiad nymphs : hence Diodorus ¹¹³ states that Zeus was nourished in the cave by *nymphs* on honey and milk. Homer (*Odys.* xiii. 104 ff.) describes a stalactitic grotto as—

ἶρόν νυμφάων, αἱ Νηϊάδες καλέονται.
ἐν δὲ κρητῆρές τε καὶ ἀμφιφορῆες ἔασι
λαῖνοι, ἐνθα δ' ἔπειτα τιθαίβωσσουσι μέλισσαι.

Again, the title *Brisaios* or *Briseus* borne by Dionysus in Lesbos, as also *Βριτώ*, *Βριτόμαρτις*, Cretan names for Artemis, connects etymologically with *βλίπτειν* 'to remove the honey from the comb' ¹¹⁴ and in fact with *μέλι*, *μέλισσα* : to the same circle undoubtedly belong the nymph *Brisa* mentioned by Cornutus ¹¹⁵ and the *Βρῖσαι* whom Hesychius takes to denote *Νύμφαι*. Aristaeus, according to a fragment of Aristotle, ¹¹⁶ learnt the art of bee-keeping from the Nymphs : Heraclides Ponticus ¹¹⁷ and the *Etymologicum*

¹⁰⁸ Athen. 624 E. On *Μελιτώη* as an anti-phrastic name for Hekate or Empousa see Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 818 n.

¹⁰⁹ Ed. Dübner, p. 91.

¹¹⁰ W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 169, condemns as guilty of 'maxima...interpretandi licentia' Stieglitz' conjecture that the bee which figures occasionally on Athenian coins refers to the rites of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis.

¹¹¹ Porphy. *de antr. Nymph.* 16.

¹¹² Hygin. *Fab.* 182.

¹¹³ Diod. *Bibl.* v. 70. Columella, *de re rust.* IX. ii., rings the changes yet further : 'Euhemerus poeta dicit, crabronibus et sole genitas apes, quas *nymphae Phryxanides* educaverunt, mox Dictaeo specu Iovis exstitisse nutrices,' &c.

¹¹⁴ Creuzer, *Symbolik* iii. 353, 355.

¹¹⁵ Cornut. on Pers. *Sat.* i. 76.

¹¹⁶ Aristot. *Frag.* 468, 1555a 15.

¹¹⁷ *Exc. pol. Heraclid.* p. 13, 16, ed. Schn.

Magnum ¹¹⁸ further specify his instructors as the *βρίσαι*. How the nymphs helped him to recover his bees has been already related. Oppian ¹¹⁹ makes him rear Dionysus in his cave *σὺν Δρυάσιν...μελισσοκόμοισί τε Νύμφαις*. Lastly, a tale told by the scholiast ¹²⁰ on Theocritus iii. 13, seems to be apposite: 'A certain Cnidian named Rhoikos saw at Nineveh a fine tree leaning over and like to collapse altogether from old age. So he supported it on props and thereby lengthened its lease of life. Upon this the nymph acknowledged her gratitude to him: for "I am its coeval (*ἡλικιώτις τοῦ φυτοῦ*)," she said, and bade him ask what he would of her. He requested her embraces. But she replied, "A bee will come and tell you the right season for wedlock."' Mr. H. B. Walters sends me the description of a fifth century vase from the van Branteghem collection,¹²¹ now in the British Museum, which represents three ladies in a garden of whom one is inscribed ΜΕΛΙΣΣΑ. This may or may not illustrate the foregoing account of the bee-nymphs: personally I should not attach any religious meaning to the scene.

Both these classes of *μέλισσαι*, the devotees of Demeter and the flesh-abstaining nymphs, found a place in the system of the latter-day mystics. A glance at Porphyry's tractate on *The Nymphs' Cavern in the Odyssey* will prove the assertion. We may feel disposed to agree with Aug. Nauck's verdict ¹²² on that work—'interpretationem loci Homerici a Porphyrio propositam tanquam absurdam respuimus'; but we must not close our eyes to the fact that it is representative of a distinct stage in the history of Greek mythology, and as such has a claim upon our attention. Porphyry's point of view will be best reached by the aid of a sequence of short extracts:—

De antr. Nymph. 7: 'Demeter rears Kore in a cavern along with nymphs.'

Ibid. 10: 'By Naiad nymphs we mean the powers that have special charge of the waters; and the same term was used generally of all souls that came down ¹²³ to be born. For it was thought that the souls hovered over the inspired water.'

Ibid. 12: 'Hence also it is customary to call wedded wives *νύμφαι*, since they are united to us for purposes of child-bearing, and to bathe them with lustral water taken from wells or streams or ever-flowing fountains.'

Ibid. 18: 'Wells and streams are akin to Hydriad nymphs; and still more so to nymphs ¹²⁴ in the sense of souls, which our forefathers called by

¹¹⁸ *Etym. Mag.* 213, 55, s.v. *βρίσαι*.

¹¹⁹ Oppian, *Ven.* iv. 275.

¹²⁰ Ed. Dübner, p. 28 f. Cp. the gloss of Hesychius: *ὁδοεμνιάδες· νύμφαι, [καὶ] αἱ Μέλιτται*.

¹²¹ See Froehner's *Catalogue* (large ed.).

¹²² Ed. 1886, Praef. xii.

¹²³ This is the Orphic doctrine of the *animarum descensus*, or descent of the unborn soul through the heavenly spheres; see Lobeck,

Aglaophamus, p. 932 ff.

¹²⁴ So I translate *νύμφαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς*, comparing the Schol. on Eur. *Hipp.* 77: *βοτὰ δὲ λέγει τὰ ποίμνια, μέλισσαν δὲ ἀλληγορικῶς αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν καθαρόν γὰρ τι ζῶον ἢ μέλισσα. ἔνθεν τὰς ἱερείας μελίσσαι καλοῦσιν οἱ ποιηταί*. W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 155, strangely paraphrases 'Nympharum animae.'

the special term μέλισσαι since they were producers of pleasure. So that Sophocles was not far wrong in saying of the souls—"The swarm of the dead hums and rises upwards."¹²⁵ Moreover, the ancients gave the name μέλισσαι to the priestesses of Demeter who were initiates of the chthonian goddess, and the name μελιτώδης to Kore herself; the moon too whose province was to bring to the birth they called μέλισσα because, the moon being a bull and its ascension the bull, bees are begotten of bulls. And souls that pass to the birth are bull-begotten.'

Ibid.: 'However, they did not apply the term μέλισσαι to all souls coming to the birth without further qualification, but only to such as should live a life of righteousness and return whence they came after doing the will of heaven. For the bee is fond of returning to its hive, and above all other creatures affects justice and sobriety... Wherefore honey-combs and bees fitly symbolize not only Hydrriad nymphs but also souls that play the nymph for purposes of birth.'

In the haze of neo-Platonism it is hard to recognize familiar land-marks. But the gist of the matter seems to be this. The soul was conceived as a water-nymph, because before birth it had hovered over the divine ocean: here the use of νύμφη to denote *bride* offered more or less shadowy support. The pure and undefiled soul was further represented as a bee, not only because it was productive of honey-sweet pleasure and a lover of order and sobriety, but also because it had come down from the horned moon as ordinary bees from the carcase of a bull. This Orphic doctrine is somewhat clumsily combined with the older mythology, which called Demeter's priestesses μέλισσαι, Kore μελιτώδης, and the moon¹²⁶ (Artemis) μέλισσα.

Having now passed in review the main passages relating to the bee-symbolism among the Greeks, we are in a position to make some general reflexions upon its character and development. The whole story becomes readily intelligible if we bear in mind the natural habits of the insect in question. Left to itself it chooses as its abode some crevice in cliff or stone. Wilkinson, writing of Egypt, says¹²⁷—'The wild bees live mostly under stones or in clefts of the rock, as in many other countries; and the expression of Moses and of the Psalmist, *honey out of the rock*,¹²⁸ shows that in Palestine their habits were the same.' What applied to Egypt and the Levant held good for Greece,—witness the following lines from the *Iliad*:

ἡύτε ἔθνεα εἰσι μελισσάων ἀδινάων,
πέτρης ἐκ γλαφυρῆς αἰεὶ νέον ἐρχομένων·
βοτρυδὸν δὲ πέτονται ἐπ' ἄνθεσιν εἰαρινοῖσιν.¹²⁹

Or again—

οἱ δ', ὥς τε σφήκες μέσον αἰόλοι ἡὲ μέλισσαι
οἰκία ποιήσονται ὁδῷ ἐπὶ παιπαλοέσῃ,

¹²⁵ Soph. *Frag.* 693.

¹²⁶ Pliny, *N.H.* xi. 15: 'mel plenilunio uberius capitur.'

¹²⁷ Wilkinson, *The Ancient Egyptians*, ii.

415.

¹²⁸ Deut. xxxii. 13, Psa. lxxxii. 16.

¹²⁹ Hom. *Il.* ii. 87 ff.

οὐδ' ἀπολείπουσιν κοῖλον δόμον, ἀλλὰ μένοντες
ἄνδρας θηρητῆρας ἀμύνονται περὶ τέκνων, κ.τ.λ.¹³⁰

Similarly Soranus¹³¹ relates that in the tomb of Hippocrates *μεχρὶ πολλοῦ σμήνος ἦν ἐργαζόμενον μέλι*. In the absence of a suitable rock, a hollow tree-trunk would serve their purpose. Thus Hesiod¹³² says of the oak-tree

ἄκρη μὲν τε φέρει βαλάνους, μέσση δὲ μελίσσας·

and F. A. Paley *ad loc.* quotes several parallels from the Latin poets. The Scholiast on Nicander¹³³ remarks that 'before bees had been domesticated, they used to construct their combs in the hollows of oak-trees, and they do so still on occasion.' Also the pseudo-Phocylides¹³⁴ writes:

κάμνει δ' ἡεροφῶιτις ἀριστοπόνος τε μέλισσα
ἢ πέτρης κοίλης κατὰ χηραμὸν ἢ δονάκεσσι
ἢ δρυὸς ὠγυγίης κατὰ κοιλάδος ἐνδοθι σίμβλων
σμήνεσι μυριότρητα κατ' ἄνθεα κηροδομοῦσα.

If neither cave nor hollow tree were at hand, the carcase of any large beast would be utilized. In *The Book of Judges* we read: 'Samson turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion.'¹³⁵ Herodotus narrates that the Amathusians cut off the head of Onesilaus and hung it up over their gateway, *κρεμαμένης δὲ τῆς κεφαλῆς καὶ οὔσης ἤδη κοίλης, ἐσμός μελισσέων ἐσδὺς ἐς αὐτὴν κηρίων ἐνέπλησε*.¹³⁶ This seems to me a more probable explanation of the *βουγενεῖς μέλισσαι* than M. de Pauw's view that they are derived from the custom of raising young swarms in the warmth of a stable.¹³⁷ It certainly tallies better with Nicander's words:

ποτὲ δ' ἔργα διαθρύψαιο μελίσσης
ἄμμιγα ποιπνύων Ὑμήτιδος· αἵ τ' ἀπὸ μόσχου
σκήνεος ἐξεγένοντο δεδουπότος ἐν νεμέεσσιν.¹³⁸

And again:

ἵπποι γὰρ σφηκῶν γένεσις, ταῦροι δὲ μελισσῶν;
σκήνεσι πυθομένοισι λυκοσπίδες ἐξεγένοντο.¹³⁹

Starting from these simple facts of the natural kingdom we obtain at once a three-fold classification. Bees may be regarded as issuing from *caverns*, or *trees*, or *carcasses*. Under each of these heads they have given rise to a more or less complicated symbolism, the development of which it remains to sketch. I shall do so in the briefest manner possible.

The bees associated with Zeus Kretagenes were occupants of the cave

¹³⁰ Hom. *Il.* xii. 167 ff.

¹³¹ Quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 18.

¹³² Hes. *W. & D.* 233.

¹³³ Ed. Bussemaker, p. 214b 5.

¹³⁴ Ed. Bergk, vv. 171-4.

¹³⁵ Judges xiv. 8.

¹³⁶ Herod. v. 114.

¹³⁷ Wilkinson, *op. cit.* ii. 416, agrees with De Pauw, and Birch his reviser does not dissent.

¹³⁸ Nic. *Alex.* 445 ff.

¹³⁹ Nic. *Ther.* 741 f.

where he was born. Hence they were invested with chthonian characteristics, on the one hand ministering to chthonian divinities such as Demeter, Dionysus Zagreus, Persephone, Rhea, and the Ephesian Artemis; on the other hand practising the chthonian gift of prophecy as the Delphic priestesses or the Parnassian Moirai or the Muses who inspired a Pindar and a Plato.

Secondly, the bees that haunted hollow trunks¹⁴⁰ originated the bee-nymphs. Pollux¹⁴¹ states that bees when their wings are grown are called *νύμφαι*. In the tale of the Cnidian Rhoikos the nymph who sends the bee as her messenger is *ἡλικιώτις τοῦ φυτοῦ*. The *δροδεμνιάδες* of Hesychius are identified with *αἱ Μέλιτται*. The *βρίσαι* of Heraclides teach the art of bee-keeping. In fact, the nymphs generally and Pan¹⁴² as their leader are recognized protectors of the hive.

Thirdly, from the discovery of bees swarming in a carcase came the belief that they represented the life of the defunct animal, and the consequent attempt to create bees with all its superstitious formulae. The prescribed method was fathered upon the pastoral deity Aristaeus, and did much to foster the conception that the soul might take the form of a bee.

Finally came the mystic school which in its rationalizing tolerance blended all three elements of the symbolism, and presented us with the bee as emblem of the nymph or unborn soul. The chthonian character of the rock-bee was admirably suited to their requirements. A little ingenuity sufficed to transform the tree-bee from a tree-nymph to a water-nymph. And the carcase-bee had relations with the bull which could easily be turned to good account.

The general impression produced on the mind of the average Greek must have been that the bee was a chthonian creature intimately connected with, if not actual embodying, the soul. From this standpoint it is not difficult to detect the significance of the *objets d'art* detailed in the opening paragraph of the present paper. The gold bees from Crete, the Crimea, and Etruria, were probably—as the gold bees of Childeric were certainly—tomb decorations, intended to symbolize the immortal soul. This is confirmed by a curious find made some forty years ago in a Sardinian grave; a bronze statue of a young man with braided hair and diadem came to light; on his breast were five bronze bees symmetrically arranged.¹⁴³ This personage has been identified—too hastily, I think—with Aristaeus. When we remember Porphyry's explanation of the *βουγενεῖς μέλισσαι*, and Servius' story of the bees springing from the body of the priestess Melissa, it is difficult to avoid

¹⁴⁰ W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 78, draws attention to the statement of Theophrastus (p. 475): *ἔχει δὲ πως ἡ μέλισσα οἰκείωσιν τινα πρὸς τὴν δρῦν*, 'quam ad rem liceat nobis commemorare quercum et Rheae (v. Apollod. *Fragm.* p. 389, ed. Heyne) sacram fuisse et Iovi.'

¹⁴¹ Pollux, Z. 147.

¹⁴² Pan as *μελισσοσός* was the guardian of

bee-hives and ate of the honey (*Anth. Pal.* ix. 226, 6-7). Honey was offered to him (Theocr. *Id.* v. 59), as also to the nymphs (Euseb. *oracul. Apollin.* iv. 9—quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 158).

¹⁴³ *Bull. arch. Sardo*, 1855, p. 65; 'séance de l'Inst. arch. de Rome, 11 janv. 1856'; *Arch. Zeit.* (Anzeig.) 1857, p. 30.

the conclusion that we have here the bee as a symbol of immortality, if not of re-incarnation. Again, W. Robert-Tornow (*op. cit.* p. 134) quotes a gem 'quae Amorem urna, cui apis insidet, navigantem demonstrat.' It is aptly enough inscribed with the words ET VLTRA. A more doubtful case is a gold ornament thus described by Perrot and Chipiez in their chapter on Phoenician Jewelry: ¹⁴⁴ 'un charmant bijou qui fait partie de la collection léguée par le duc de Luynes à la Bibliothèque nationale. Il a été, dit-on, découvert dans l'île de Milo; il est en or, et il a la forme d'un corymbe épanoui, d'une sorte de large fleur traitée d'une manière conventionnelle; les extrémités des pétales, que séparent de fines granulations, sont dépassées par les sépales du calice. Le milieu est formé par un saphir. Sur la surface de ce disque font saillie deux masques de femme, coiffés à l'égyptienne, et deux têtes de taureau. Plus près du centre, on voit deux abeilles, qui semblent être venues se poser sur la fleur.' The discovery of such a jewel on one of the Cyclades reminds us of the gold plaques embossed with the bee-goddess that came from Camiros in Rhodes. The female heads, Egyptian in style, support the comparison. Bee, flower, and goddess were again associated in the cult of the Ephesian Artemis whose statue was adorned with rosettes as well as with bees. And the bucrania side by side with the bees on the open flower recall the words of Lactantius: ¹⁴⁵ 'quamquam apes, mellis colligendi causa circum flores volitantes, eorum ex doliolis nasci pulcherrima ac valde poetica est opinio, tamen minus vulgaris haec erat quam illa qua apes ex corpore bubulo putrefacto genitas esse putabatur.' But, in default of proof, it is safer to assume that the collocation of bee and bull was accidental, and that the trinket itself was devoid of religious meaning. The same may be said of a banded agate in the British Museum, ¹⁴⁶ belonging to the Townley collection; it represents a vase upon which are a butterfly and a bee. Both these insects are emblematic of the soul at times, but here perhaps they are merely natural objects forming an artistic scene. Greater importance may be attached to an amphora of Samian ware decorated with a row of bees, which was found by Messieurs Pottier and Reinach in the necropolis at Myrina: ¹⁴⁷ it had in all probability contained offerings to the dead.

The sacrificial value of honey accords well with the chthonian nature of the bee. Porphyry ¹⁴⁸ tells us: *πεποίνηται ἤδη τὸ μέλι καὶ θανάτου σύμβολον, διὸ καὶ μέλιτος σπονδὰς τοῖς χθονίοις ἔθουν.* These *μελίσπονδα* are mentioned as well-pleasing to the gods by Plutarch, ¹⁴⁹ who elsewhere

¹⁴⁴ Perrot-Chipiez, *Hist. de l'Art* iii. 829, Fig. 591.

¹⁴⁵ Lactant. i. 8, 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Brit. Mus. Cat. of Gems*, No. 424.

¹⁴⁷ *Bull. de Corr. Hellénique*, vol. 9, p. 197.

¹⁴⁸ Porphyry, *de ant. Nymph.* 18; cp. *ibid.* 16, *de abst.* ii. 20.

¹⁴⁹ Plutarch, *de cohīb. ir.* 464c. In the *Batrachomyomachia* 39 we find mention of *χρηστὸν μελίτωμα, τὸ καὶ μάκαρες ποθέουσιν.*

Varro, *de re rustica* III. xvi. 5, calls honey 'et diis et hominibus acceptum.'

Perhaps more than a mere dietetic reform led the Pythagoreans to abjure wine and to feed on honey: Diog. Laert. VIII. i. 18 *αὐτὸν δ' ἀρκεῖσθαι μέλιτι μόνῳ φασί τινες ἢ κηρίῳ ἢ (leg. καὶ) ἄρτῳ, οἶνου δὲ μεθ' ἡμέραν μὴ γεύεσθαι.* (In support of the correction I would cite Iamblichus, *de Pyth. vit.* xxi. 97 *ἀρίστω δὲ ἐχρῶντο ἄρτῳ καὶ μέλιτι ἢ κηρίῳ, οἶνου δὲ μεθ' ἡμέραν*

observes: "Ἕλληνες τε νηφάλια ταῦτα καὶ μελίσπονδα θύουσιν, ὡς ἀντίθετον φύσιν μάλιστα τοῦ μέλιτος πρὸς τὸν οἶνον ἔχοντος."¹⁵⁰ It must be admitted that the cause here assigned hardly carries conviction with it; Greek deities, especially those with chthonian relations, were not so averse to the vine. I suspect that this offering of honey instead of wine is rather to be considered as a survival from a primitive state of society in which wine was unknown. Plutarch *loc. cit.* had previously remarked that honey was σπονδὴ καὶ μέθυ πρὶν ἄμπελον φανῆναι. καὶ μέχρι νῦν τῶν τε βαρβάρων οἱ μὴ πίνοντες οἶνον μελίτειον πίνουσιν, κ.τ.λ. This is borne out by the Orphic myth¹⁵¹ in which Zeus circumvents Kronos by means of honey used as an intoxicant: πλησθεὶς γὰρ μέλιτος μεθύει καὶ σκοτοῦται ὡς ὑπὸ οἶνου καὶ ὑπνοῖ ὡς παρὰ Πλάτωνι ὁ Πόρος τοῦ νέκταρος πλησθεὶς· οὐπω γὰρ οἶνος ἦν. φησὶ γὰρ παρ' Ὀρφεὶ ἡ Νύξ τῷ Διὶ ὑποτιθεμένη τὸν διὰ μέλιτος δόλον—

εἶτ' ἂν δὴ μιν ἴδῃαι ὑπὸ δρυσὶν ὑψικόμοισιν
ἔργοισιν μεθύοντα μελισσάων ἐριβόμβων—

δῆσον αὐτόν. δ καὶ πάσχει ὁ Κρόνος. Nonnos¹⁵² describes the way in which honey was ousted by wine under the form of a contest between Aristaeus and Dionysus, the gods adjudging the victory to the latter. However in the ritual of certain divinities, as we have already seen, μελίσπονδα continued to be offered. And the conservatism of religion is strikingly illustrated by the fact that wine *as such* was not allowed in the temple of the Bona Dea; the jar in which it was carried was called *the honey-pot*, and the wine itself was spoken of as *milk*!¹⁵³

Honey and milk together with water occur as a chthonian oblation in the Orphic *Argonautica* 570 ff.:

αὐτὰρ ἔγωγε
ψυχὴν ἱλασάμην σπένδων μελίγματα χύτλων,
ὑδατὶ τ' ἡδὲ γάλακτι, μελισσορῦτοις ἅμα νασμοῖς
λοιβὰς ἐκπροχέων.

With this W. Robert-Tornow compares the offerings made at the tomb of Hesiod by the Nymphs:—¹⁵⁴

οὐ μετεῖχον.) Sophocles, *O.C.* 466 ff. describes a *καθαρμὸς* in honour of the Eumenides which involved the use of honey—wine being prohibited: ὕδατος, μελίσσης· μηδὲ προσφέρειν μέθυ. Athenaeus, *Deip.* 693 F, states that in Greece οἱ θύοντες τῷ Ἑλίῳ . . . μέλι σπένδουσιν, οἶνον οὐ φέροντες τοῖς βομοῖς; and W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 170, cites an ancient ring on which 'apis invenitur, cuius caput sol ipse videtur esse.' Suidas quotes Polemon to the effect that νηφάλιοι θυσαίαι were offered in Athens to Mnemosyne, Eos, Helios, Selene, the Nymphs (cp. Paus. V. xv. 6), and Aphrodite Ourania (cp. Empedocles *ap.* Athen. *Deip.* 510 D). See further Robertson-Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 203.

¹⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Symp.* iv. 6, 672 B.

¹⁵¹ Porphyry, *de ant. Nymph.* 16. Cp. Xenophon, *exped. Cyr.* IV. viii. 20, of the soldiers who ate poisonous honey in Asia Minor, τῶν κηρίων ὅσοι ἔφαγον . . . οἱ μὲν ὀλίγον ἐδηδοκότες σφόδρα μεθύουσιν ἐφύεσαν. Orph. *Lith.* 219 ff. σὺν δὲ μελικρήτῳ ἰο μετὰ γλυκεροῖο μιγέντα | ὄρνυε πινόμεναι νόμφην, ἵνα νήπιον νῆα μαστοῖσιν μεθύοντα παρ' εὐνάλοισι κομίζοι.

¹⁵² Nonnos, *Dion.* xiii. 258-279 and xix. 228-260.

¹⁵³ Macrobius, *Sat.* I. xii. 268. Similarly Epiphanius, *adv. haer.* ii. 485 (quoted by Loebck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 877), states that τὸ ἕξος μέλι τινὲς ἐπανάμασαν.

¹⁵⁴ *Anth. Pal.* vii. 55.

Νύμφαι κρηνιάδων λούσαν ἀπὸ σφετέρων,
καὶ τάφον ὑψώσαντο· γάλακτι δὲ ποιμένες αἰγῶν
ἔρραναν, ξανθῷ μιξάμενοι μέλιτι.

A mixture of honey and milk termed *μελίκρητον* is mentioned in the *Odyssey*,¹⁵⁵ though there wine has already taken its place as an additional libation :—¹⁵⁶

ἀμφ' αὐτῷ δὲ χοὴν χεῖσθαι πᾶσιν νεκύεσσι,
πρῶτα μελικρήτῳ, μετέπειτα δὲ ἡδέϊ οἶνῳ,
τὸ τρίτον αὐθ' ὕδατι· ἐπὶ δ' ἄλφιστα λευκὰ παλύνειν.

In Aeschylus *Persae* 609 ff. Atossa is represented—

παιδὸς πατρὶ πρευμενεῖς χοῶς
φέρουσ' ἄπερ νεκροῖσι μελικτήρια,
βοός τ' ἀφ' ἀγνῆς λευκὸν εὖποτον γάλα,
τῆς τ' ἀνθεμουργοῦ στάγμα, παμφαῆς μέλι,
λιβάσιν ὕδρηλαῖς παρθένου πηγῆς μέτα,
ἀκήρατόν τε μητρὸς ἀγρίας ἄπο
ποτὸν παλαιᾶς ἀμπέλου γάνος τόδε· κ.τ.λ.

So in Euripides *Orestes* 114—115 Hermione is bidden to come forth—

ἐλθούσα δ' ἀμφὶ τὸν Κλυταιμνήστρας τάφον
μελίκρατ' ἄφες γάλακτος, οἶνωπόν τ' ἄχνην.

And in *I.T.* 162 ff. Iphigeneia offers—

πηγῆς τ' οὐρέϊων ἐκ μόσχων,
βάκχου τ' οἶνηρᾶς λοιβάς,
ξουθᾶν τε πόνημα μελισσᾶν,
ἃ νεκροῖς θελκτήρια κεῖται.

Again, the *πέλανος* which was poured upon the tomb of the deceased was a semi-liquid substance compounded of honey, oil, and meal.¹⁵⁷ Silius Italicus¹⁵⁸ makes honey and wine an offering to Dis; honey, wine, and milk an offering to Proserpine. Apollonius Rhodius¹⁵⁹ says of Jason :—

οἶνου ἀκηρασίοιο μελισταγέας χέε λοιβάς
Γαίῃ τ' ἐνναέταις τε θεοῖς ψυχαῖς τε καμόντων
ἡρώων· γουνοῦτο δ' ἀπήμονας εἶναι ἀρωγούς.

In short, honey everywhere enters into the ritual of the dead. Hence those who were initiated into the Mithraic *λεοντικά*, mysteries symbolizing

¹⁵⁵ Hom. *Odys.* x. 518 ff.

¹⁵⁶ Pausanias V. xv. 6 regards the sacrifice of honey as a survival (*ἀρχαῖόν τινα τρόπον*) even where a libation of wine also was in vogue.

¹⁵⁷ Cakes of wheat soaked in honey, called *ἔμπαι*, were offered to Demeter (Schol. on Ni-

cander, *Alex.* 450), and honey-cakes (? in the form of bees) to Adonis (Theocrit. *Id.* xv. 117–118).

¹⁵⁸ Silius Italicus xiii. 415 f., 434, quoted by W. Robert-Tornow, *op. cit.* p. 141.

¹⁵⁹ Apoll. Rhod. ii. 1272 ff.

metempsychosis, washed the hands in honey and cleansed the tongue with the same.¹⁶⁰

To the Greeks then, as to other branches of the Aryan stock,¹⁶¹ the bee was a sacred animal closely associated with the birth and death of the soul. This belief is not altogether extinct in modern Europe. In the Engadine it is still thought that the souls of men emigrate from the world and return to it in the form of bees,¹⁶² which are there considered messengers of death. When some one dies the bee is invoked almost as if it were the soul of the departed :

‘Bienchen, unser Herr ist todt,
Verlass mich nicht in meiner Noth.’¹⁶³

In Germany people are unwilling to buy the bees of a dead man, it being believed that they will die or disappear immediately after him : moreover, the death of the master is announced to the bees in the hive.¹⁶⁴ Similarly in some parts of France the bees must be consoled if a death occurs in the house ; otherwise they would fly off, never to return.¹⁶⁵ An equally strange custom is observed in Poitou : ‘ Il est d’usage, lorsque le maître de la maison meurt, de mettre les ruches en deuil, ce qui se fait en clouant à chaque ruche un petit morceau d’étoffe noire. D’après les dires des vieux du pays, si on n’observait pas cette tradition, les abeilles mordraient le maître décédé, lorsqu’il reviendrait, la nuit, pour les visiter.’¹⁶⁶ Is it in such superstitions as these that we should seek the explanation of Moschus’ lament ?¹⁶⁷

μάλων οὐκ ἔρρευσε καλὸν γλάγος, οὐ μέλι σίμβλων,
κάθθανε δ’ ἐν καρῷ λυπεύμενον· οὐκ ἔτι γὰρ δέῃ
τῷ μέλιτος τῷ σῶ τεθνακότος αὐτὸ τρυγᾶσθαι.

The *Palatine Anthology* (vii. 717) contains at least one clear reference to the custom of announcing a death in the household to the bees :—

Νηϊάδες καὶ ψυχρὰ βοαύλια ταῦτα μελίσσαις
οἶμον ἐπ’ εἰαρινὴν λέξατε νισσομέναις,
ὥς ὁ γέρων Λεύκιππος ἐπ’ ἀρσιπόδεσσι λαγωῖς
ἔφθιτο χειμερὶν νυκτὶ λοχησάμενος.
σμήνεα δ’ οὐκέτι οἱ κομέειν φίλον· αἱ δὲ τὸν ἄκρης
γείτονα ποιμένιαι πολλὰ ποθοῦσι νάπαι.

¹⁶⁰ Porphyr. *de antr. Nymph.* 15.

¹⁶¹ Gubernatis, *Zoological Mythology* ii. 216 ff.

¹⁶² Possibly this conception in Greece influenced the artistic representation of the soul. The minute winged forms that hover insect-like over the funeral stelai depicted on Attic lekuthoi are perhaps inspired by the idea that the soul appears as a bee. The same compromise between human and insect form would account for the wings attributed to the dead. In support of this it might be urged that a well-known

vase in the Munich collection shows four winged figures emptying pitchers into a large jar sunk in the earth : and winged ὄδροφόροι at once recall Callimachus’ line—*Δηοῖ δ’ οὐκ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὕδαρ φορέουσι Μέλισσαι.*

¹⁶³ Gubernatis, *op. cit.* ii. 218 n. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Idem, *ibid.* ii. 219.

¹⁶⁵ *Revue des Traditions Populaires*, 1891, p. 154.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 1891, p. 704.

¹⁶⁷ Mosch. iii. 36 ff.

In any case I submit that sufficient evidence has been adduced to disprove the assertion of Lobeck who, wishing to derive the Μέλισσαι of Delphi from the verb μέλισσω, writes :¹⁶⁸ ‘mellis vero et apum similitudo, nisi quis longissime repetere velit, nulla apparet in vatibus et sacerdotibus.’

ARTHUR BERNARD COOK.

¹⁶⁸ Lobeck, *Aglaoph.* p. 817 f.